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- (1) Poll on Koizumi cabinet, political parties, DPJ President

Ozawa

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
April 11, 2006

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote the results of a survey conducted in March.)

Q: Do you support the Koizumi cabinet?

Yes	56.0	(54.9)
No	35.5	(35.9)
Other answers (O/A)	2.3	(3.0)
No answer (N/A)	6.2	(6.2)

Q: Which political party do you support?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	42.8	(42.3)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)	14.0	(11.1)
New Komeito (NK)	2.2	(3.0)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)	1.5	(1.3)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)	1.0	(1.9)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)	0.1	(0.2)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)	0.2	(0.1)
Other political parties	---	(0.1)
None	36.9	(39.2)
N/A	1.2	(0.8)

Q: The DPJ elected Ichiro Ozawa as its new leader. Do you have expectations for him?

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Yes	32.1
Yes to a certain degree	24.2
No to a certain degree	17.1
No	22.4
N/A	4.2

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the foregoing question)
Why? Pick as many reasons as you like from among those listed below, if any.

He has leadership ability	28.0
He's a man of action	28.0
His political ideal is clear-cut	18.4
He's a policy expert	13.5
He's strong in debate	9.6
He's trustworthy	6.3
He's rich in political experience	57.5
He can stand up to Prime Minister Koizumi	31.8
O/A+N/A	2.3

Q: Do you think new DPJ President Ozawa can turn around his party?

Yes	17.0
Yes to a certain degree	33.0
No to a certain degree	20.9
No	22.3
N/A	6.8

Q: Do you think new DPJ President Ozawa will be a threat to the LDP?

Yes	24.0
Yes to a certain degree	28.0
No to a certain degree	21.6
No	21.4
N/A	5.0

Q: Do you think the DPJ is competent enough to take office?

Yes	30.1
No	61.2

Polling methodology

Date of survey: April 8-9.

Subjects of survey: 3,000 persons chosen from among all eligible voters throughout the country (at 250 locations on a stratified two-stage random sampling basis).

Method of implementation: Door-to-door visits for face-to-face interviews.

Number of valid respondents: 1,823 persons (60.8%).

Breakdown of respondents: Male-48%, female-52%.

(2) Close-up 2006: Abductee Megumi Yokota's husband identified; Whether Japan-ROK cooperation is possible remains an open question

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)
April 12, 2006

By Akiko Horiyama, Seoul

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The Japanese government yesterday unveiled the results of DNA testing showing that the husband of Megumi Yokota, who was abducted by North Korea, is most likely Kim Young Nam, a South Korean man also abducted by North Korea. The test results were released to coincide with a high-level North Korean official's visit to Tokyo. Behind this was Japan's calculation aimed at boosting international pressure on North Korea together with South Korea, which is also in the position of victim like Japan. The South Korean government, however, does not want its range of its policy options toward North Korea narrowed by the abduction issue. Whether Seoul will respond to Tokyo's call for cooperation is a delicate question.

Seoul concerned about strained relations with Pyongyang

"His being the father of Hye Gyong (the daughter of Megumi Yokota) means he is related to Megumi's parents. What I want to do first is to arrange an occasion for Hye Gyong's grandparents to meet," said Choi Sung Yong, president of South Korea's Family Assembly Abducted to North Korea.

After persuading the family members of five South Korean men allegedly abducted to North Korea, including Kim Young Nam, to cooperate on DNA testing, Choi called on the Japanese and South Korean governments to conduct DNA analysis. Bolstered by the outcome of the DNA testing, he expects progress on the process of rescuing victims. But Kim Young Nam's blood sister, Kim Young Cha, 48, gave this skeptical comment: "I don't think North Korea will admit to the abduction. I wonder whether the South Korean government, which until now has been unwilling to take action, will move to negotiate with North Korea, taking a risk that it might bring strains to North-South relations."

The South Korean government has assumed a wait-and-see attitude after releasing a statement that it would verify the facts. Apparently, it does not want to worsen North-South relations. In addition, it does not want to be fettered by the abduction issue at the negotiating table of the six-party talks like Japan. Seoul's concern is that if it were to be put in the same situation as Japan is, it would be forced to narrow (its policy options in the area of diplomacy) and thereby weaken its bargaining ability, according to a senior official of the South Korean Foreign Affairs & Trade Ministry.

South Korea has recognized 485 South Koreans as abductees. Of them, 434 were fishermen. The South Korean government has regarded them, as well as former South Korean soldiers who were held as prisoners during the Korean War (1950-1953) and have not returned home (estimated to be over 500), as special separated families. It also has asked North Korea via the family reunion project run by the Red Cross societies of South and North Korea to arrange meetings with those soldiers or investigate into their whereabouts.

But North Korea has never budged from its official position that there are neither former South Korean soldiers held as prisoners of war nor are there South Korean abductees, and it has said that it can instead investigate into missing people. So far, only a dozen cases of family reunions between South Korean abductees and their family members have been realized in the name of reunions of separated families. The abductees' return to South Korea has not been realized yet.

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Faced with sharp criticism from abduction victims' organizations, Unification Minister Lee Jong Seok stated in February: "I'll strive to bring abductees back to our country." But a senior Unification Ministry official opined that whether the South Korean delegate will bring up the abduction issue in the upcoming ministerial discourse "remains an open question." There is no knowing what will happen then.

DNA analysis released, timed with Vice Minister Kim's Japan visit

By Takuji Nakata

"It has been made clear that the abduction issue is an international issue. Japan and South Korea will work in close cooperation to resolve the issue down the road." This remark came from Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe at a press briefing yesterday, in which he unveiled the results of DNA tests.

Kim Young Nam has already been known as a (South Korean) abductee, but "It is a more tragic thing to have married one abductee to another after having abducted them from different countries," a government source pointed out. The Japanese government wants to build an international coalition against North Korea in calling international attention to the humanitarian issues related to North Korea. By doing so, it would like to check the South Korean government, which tends to take a markedly soft attitude toward the North. Tokyo intends to urge Seoul to line up with Japan and the United States, which have both taken a tough-line on North Korea, including their response to Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions. Japan will provide South Korea with Hye Gyeong's blood to help Seoul to conduct an independent DNA test on Kim Young Nam.

Considering the abduction issue as a top priority issue, the government attended the Japan-North Korea Comprehensive and Parallel Talks held in February, but the talks ended without any progress. The next step the government will take is to put more pressure on North Korea to give a true account of the abduction of Megumi, including whether Megumi's husband Kim Chol Jun, who North Korea says works at a special agency, is Kim Young Nam.

The government already knew the general picture of the results of DNA tests in mid-March, but it delayed the release of the results until yesterday, when North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan was in Japan.

In that regard, Abe told a press conference, "The results happened to be released today," but he emphasized at the same time: "It was very good timing, because we were able to convey this fact directly to Mr. Kim Kye Gwan and urge him to resolve the issue. We were able to reveal our strong will to him."

(3) Japan, China, ROK bustling about trying to bring about US-DPRK dialogue that they view as key to resumption of six-party talks

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)
April 11, 2006

Japan, China, and South Korea are all seeking to bring about an early resumption of the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear ambitions. They yesterday were seen trying to set the stage for the United States and North Korea to have contact. On the other

hand, during three days of talks between Japan and North Korea over such issues as Japanese abductees, Japan failed to bridge the gap with the North. Japan and South Korea held consultations with the United States together, while China made contact twice with North Korea. The key to breaking the stalemate apparently lies in whether direct contact will take place between the US and North Korea, both of which are in confrontation over financial sanctions imposed by the US on the North.

Japan-North Korea

Japan ranked first in terms of the total length of meetings with a high-level North Korean official who arrived in Japan on April 17. It spent a total of 5 hours and 40 minutes for three days of talks with that official.

Emerging from Japan-North Korea talks yesterday, Kenichiro Sasae, chief of Japan's Foreign Ministry Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, remarked: "We brought up the abduction issue, but we focused our attention on the six-party talks." Japan did so thinking that progress on the nuclear issue would help the security of Japan and the abduction issue to advance.

Meanwhile, Japan-North Korea talks would have been a good opportunity for North Korea to underscore its dialogue line to the international audience. Both sides enjoyed the benefits of the talks, but their talks got them nowhere.

Japan-US-South Korea

During a meeting last night, Japan, the US, and South Korea looked for ways to bring North Korea back to six-party talks. After the meeting, US Assistant Secretary of State Hill gave this account: "I had a very good discussion with Japan and South Korea."

But the Bush administration and the Roh Moo Hyun administration are far apart over North Korea policy. Japan, the US, and South Korea can join hands to call on North Korea to abandon its nuclear programs and return to the six-party talks at an early date. But, Hill stressed, "The point is that North Korea needs to make clear its willingness to take part in the talks," indicating his intention to pressure the North to return to six-party talks unconditionally. Meanwhile, South Korea's chief negotiator, Chun Young Woo, director in charge of the Korean Peninsula peace talks, insisted on concessions from the US, noting: "All members need to be flexible."

China-North Korea

North Korea's Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan late yesterday reiterated that "financial sanctions" stood in the way of the efforts to resume the six-party talks and revealed to the press that he sounded out Hill about holding bilateral talks between North Korea and the US. North Korea's diplomatic goal in the short run is to get the financial sanctions removed and in the medium- to long-term to keep the Kim Jong Il regime in place. The North views the US as the only negotiating partner from which Pyongyang can expect some results in both areas.

Paying close attention to North Korea, Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei of China, the host nation of the six-party talks, yesterday indicated his willingness to take part in talks with North Korea at anytime, while he was bustling about trying to realize US-

North Korea dialogue by arranging an individual meeting this morning.

"We can expect a certain extent of change (in North Korea's attitude)." Making this remark in one negotiation and another with his counterparts from other nations, Wu revealed his enthusiasm about realizing a one-on-one meeting between the US and North Korea. Behind this move seems to be his hope of scoring

points ahead of President Hu Jintao's planned visit to the US scheduled for late this month. The time left for him to do so is limited, because Hill is set to leave Japan as early as tomorrow.

(4) Defense Agency, Nago City differ on airstrip length; Nago insists on 1,500 meters

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 1) (Full)
April 12, 2006

The Defense Agency and the municipal government of Nago City (in Okinawa Prefecture) have now concurred on a remodified plan to lay down a V-shaped pair of airstrips on an alternative facility to be built in a coastal area of Camp Schwab for the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station. However, the agency and the city were found yesterday to have differed on the length of the newly planned runways. The agency has plans to build 1,500-meter runways, which are as long as the one previously planned to be built in the camp's coastal area (across the cape of Henoko in the city of Nago) but which will have an overall length of 1,800 meters with buffer zones, according to Defense Agency Administrative Deputy Director General Takemasa Moriya's April 10 press remarks. Meanwhile, Nago City's Deputy Mayor Bunshin Suematsu said yesterday afternoon that the agency and the city have yet to concur on anything about the tarmacs, including how long and what scale.

"In our consultations (that led to the basic agreement), we didn't talk about any figures, such as the length and size of the runways," Suematsu said. He also said: "They didn't tell us why they need that long runways. We'll need to discuss specifics from now on." Nago City has asked the Defense Agency to shorten the runways alone to 1,300 meters with an overall length of up to 1,500 meters.

In the meantime, Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga has declared that the runways would have an overall length of 1,800 meters. "The runway's length was set at 1,800 meters in the interim report released last fall," Nukaga stated before the House of Councillors Foreign and Defense Affairs Committee in its meeting held yesterday.

Nukaga also stated, "When it comes to how large the runways will be, we've yet to determine anything in detail." The defense chief went on, "We will talk well with the city of Nago about details." This can be taken as indicating that the Defense Agency and Nago City will focus on the runways' size in their talks to be held from now on.

The basic agreement, which was reached in written form on April 7 between the government and Nago City, is an accord on where to build the replacement facility for Futenma airfield. It has no mention of the runways' length.

The government is planning to set up a consultative body with

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local officials on the Futenma replacement facility. However, the government's view diverges from local requests. This will likely become a new problem to be resolved.

Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro stressed in a press conference held on the evening of April 8 that Nago would hold talks with the government about where to build the runways. The mayor also referred to the city's proposal to shorten the runways to 1,300 meters. "Basically," he said, "that's our stance." Meanwhile, he also explained that the government and the city did not talk about the runways' length whatsoever.

Nago City's Deputy Mayor Suematsu also reiterated the city's basic way of thinking: "SACO (Japan-US Special Action Committee on Facilities and Areas in Okinawa) has agreed to set the runway's length at 1,300 meters. So the runways should not be longer than that. That's our stance."

(5) Futenma relocation plan: Government has to pay high price for

prioritizing talks with US over local communities

ASAHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
April 9, 2006

By proposing an unexpected plan to construct two runways in a V-shape, the government managed to reach agreement with the Nago and nearby municipal governments on relocating the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa Prefecture. But Okinawa Governor Inamine has expressed his opposition to the plan. On US force realignment plans in base-hosting areas other than Okinawa, as well, the government has yet to reach agreement with local communities. Local communities involved in such plans are now distrustful of the government's stance of prioritizing talks with the US over negotiations with them.

After meeting with Governor Inamine, Defense Agency (JDA) Director General Nukaga told reporters yesterday:

"I do not think Governor Inamine will make requests regarding each specific base problem. He supposedly intends to determine the prefectural government's response after seeing details set by Japan and the US for a final report."

Nukaga indicated, though choosing his words, that even if the governor continued to oppose the Cape Henoko plan, the government would not allow him to obstruct the process of formation of a final report by the Japanese and US governments.

The government's attention is focused on "a final report." Japan and the US missed a March 31 deadline for settling details of realigning US forces in Japan. The government is eager to strike a deal for a final report by breaking the impasse on the issue of Japan bearing part of the cost of transferring US Marines from Okinawa to Guam during the planned talks with the US on April 13-14.

However, the Okinawa governor has the right to approve or deny land reclamation projects in public waters as "an ace in the hole." Without the agreement of the governor, it will be impossible for the government to start construction work.

The construction work at Cape Henoko would finally begin after three years of environmental impact assessment. Inamine's term of

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office expires in December. But an informed source said: "Should Inamine or anyone who assumes the same stance as Inamine be elected in the upcoming gubernatorial election, the relocation plan will not move forward."

In the government and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), some officials have suggested the government should enact a law that would transfer authority on land reclamation from the prefectural governor to the central government. A senior LDP member said: "Mr. Inamine does not need to change his stance. We will take appropriate measures." But such a high-handed approach would inevitably evoke strong reactions from the Okinawa government.

In a referendum in March, a majority of residents said "no" to the planned relocation of carrier-based aircraft to the US Marine Corps' Iwakuni Air Base in Yamaguchi Prefecture. As seen from this, the government is having difficulty persuading base-hosting local communities to go along with realignment proposals.

(6) Probing the Futenma relocation agreement: Behind-the-scenes spadework conducted for X-shaped plan; Cabinet ministers pretended to allow only minor changes; Giving in to local request, government settled on V-shaped plan

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
April 11, 2006

The subject of relocating the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station has taken a large step forward with an agreement reached between the government and Nago to build two runways in a V-shape

on the coastline of Camp Schwab. Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga had scurried around in order to come up with an X-shaped plan, known as the "Nukaga magic" by persons concerned. The plan required meticulous coordination behind the scenes.

Nukaga secretly met with Chief Cabinet Shinzo Abe and Foreign Minister Taro Aso in Tokyo March 13, and the defense chief unveiled the X-shaped plan for the first time. Abe and Aso were asked by Nukaga to keep the plan to themselves.

Japan and the United States reached an agreement last year. Shimabukuro opposed it, demanding the planned airfield be removed further offshore. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi refused to make any changes to the government's plan, but the three cabinet ministers kept studying compromise plans.

Koizumi thought that meeting with protests by anti-base members, construction work would not start unless the new facilities were built on an existing US base. Abe successfully convinced Koizumi, telling him that there would be no construction work without local consent. This prompted Koizumi to order Abe to work things out with the Defense Agency. As a result, Nukaga, Abe, and Aso held talks March 13.

Having served as deputy chief cabinet secretary in the Hashimoto and Obuchi cabinets, Nukaga had strong personal ties to Okinawa. Nukaga attempted to determine Nago's bottom line behind the scenes. He eventually learned from an influential individual in Nago that steps like moving the runway would be insufficient to convince the city.

This forced Nukaga to resort to the X-shaped plan, which was the most dramatic plan of all the revision schemes secretly worked

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out by the Defense Facilities Administration Agency since February. The X-format plan would satisfy the government's desire for ground-based construction work and Nago's call for avoiding the residential areas. The option would also be able to generate a far greater impact than just moving the runway.

An additional runway was certain to prolong the construction period and boost the construction cost. As a result, talks were held March 16 among Nukaga, Abe, Aso, Okinawa Affairs Minister Yuriko Koike, and Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki. Nukaga then called on Koizumi at his official residence on March 21, a Japanese holiday, to obtain his informal consent.

The government still could not afford to show its cards to Nago. Koizumi and Nukaga continued to pretend that the government would only allow minor changes by saying to reporters, "We don't mean to be so stubborn to refuse moving it even 1 centimeter."

Negotiations between Nukaga and Shimabukuro began on the night of March 21. After then, the defense chief held five rounds of talks with Shimabukuro, which gave him confidence to bring the Futenma issue to a settlement.

Abe also met with US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer on March 28 to obtain his understanding about constructing an additional runway. Late that night, Abe assembled the five cabinet ministers at a Tokyo hotel. Nukaga searched for the timing to propose the two-runway plan to Nago.

Nukaga met with Shimabukuro for the sixth time on April 7. Their talks lasted four and a half hours. Shimabukuro asked to move the southern runway a little southward in order to avoid an impact on the eastern residential area. Giving in to Shimabukuro's request, Nukaga eventually agreed to change the X-shaped runway plan into a V-shaped plan.

(7) Okinawa in dilemma over Futenma relocation; Government eyes final report later this month, hoping that agreement reached by affected municipalities will help soften Inamine's stance

April 9, 2006

Talks on April 8 between the central government and Okinawa on the relocation of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station ended without reaching an agreement. But because Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine showed a certain level of understanding of a plan to build two runways in a V-shape, the government thinks it is possible for Tokyo and Washington to produce their US force realignment final report later this month and obtain Okinawa's consent.

Koizumi-Inamine talks envisaged

On April 8, Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga held talks with Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine for about three hours. In the final hour, five local chiefs, including Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro, joined them. The Defense Agency envisaged talks between Prime Minister Koizumi and Gov. Inamine for settling the issue. The Defense Agency allowed Shimabukuro and other local chiefs to attend its talks with Inamine in a bid to soften the governor's stance by underlining the fact that the concerned municipalities, who have more direct interests in the plan,

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reached a basic agreement.

Shimabukuro sat across from Inamine, who reportedly commented at one point, "I'm not opposed to the government plan." But the talks broke off in the end, and the envisaged Koizumi-Inamine talks did not occur.

Inamine in agony

In November 1999, the year after his election, Inamine announced his acceptance of the government's original Henoko offshore plan on the condition that the envisaged airport be used as a military-civilian airport that the US military could use for 15 years. Inamine rejected the Nukaga-Shimabukuro agreement because such an announcement made by himself. He cannot accept the revised plan so easily that would give no access to civilian planes and carries no time limit. The gubernatorial election coming up in November makes it more difficult for Inamine to change his policy direction.

But the affected municipalities have strong expectations for the financial assistance from the government.

Governor's support essential

The central government intends to make every possible effort to win Inamine's support on the issue, because the governor has the authority to approve projects using public waters.

The government stressed the advantage of the plan agreed last week, saying the original plan would require more than 10 years to complete, whereas the new plan will take only about eight years. Yet unless Inamine endorses the reclamation project, the plan could end up as pie in the sky.

Nukaga said: "Governor Inamine plans to make his decision after Japan and the US finalize their report on the realignment of US forces in Japan." The government intends to compile the final report later this month following the April 13-14 Japan-US senior-working-level talks of defense and foreign affairs officials. The government also intends to win Inamine's support by clearly spelling out ways to reduce Okinawa's burden in the final report.

But it is not clear whether the government's scenario will go smoothly, as the two countries have yet to agree on how to share the cost of relocating US Marines from Okinawa to Guam.

Nukaga's secret X-shaped plan turned into V-shaped plan

The V-shaped plan that won Nago's consent was a product of concessions made in the four-and-a-half hours of talks April 7 between defense chief Nukaga and Nago Mayor.

Their talks started at 4:00 p.m. On the table was a design to build two runways in an X-shape. The plan was designed to build the main runway by slightly turning the direction of the government-proposed runway counterclockwise and the takeoff-only sub-runway clockwise. Nukaga reportedly came up with the X-shaped plan in February to strike a balance between Nago's demand to remove Henoko, Toyohara, and Abu districts and Ginozason from the flight path and the government's intention not to move the facilities offshore.

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Nukaga did not present his "secret plan" in his talks with Shimabukuro on March 26 and April 4 out of concern that it would prompt Nago to pursue opposition for opposition's sake, arming itself with all the knowledge it can gather. Upon obtaining US consent, the defense chief used his trump card in his talks with Shimabukuro at the final phase.

Shimabukuro insisted on Nago's plan to build a single runway further offshore. Nukaga rebutted, "The X-shaped plan meets the city's demand to remove residential areas from the flight paths."

Shimabukuro asked for a break. After returning to the negotiation table, the Nago mayor again pressed Nukaga to move the runway a little further offshore, citing a residential area in the Toyohara district. Nukaga refused to make major changes. The V-shaped plan resulted from their concessions while giving consideration to the marine habitat in shallow waters and other factors.

SCHIEFFER